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INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 3768
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 9447
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE 4384
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 9467
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 4114
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1097
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1742
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000838

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: UPBEAT CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF SEES POSSIBILITY FOR
SUCCESS

REF: A. KATHMANDU 652 (NOTAL)

- [1](#)B. KATHMANDU 766
- [1](#)C. KATHMANDU 833
- [1](#)D. KATHMANDU 831

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty, Reasons, 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) In a March 28 meeting, Chief of Army Staff General Pyar Jung Thapa told the Ambassador that he thought Nepal could successfully address the Maoist insurgency if enough military, diplomatic, political and economic pressure could be brought to bear on the Maoists. He cited a number of recent military successes to buttress his views, although he mentioned that the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) could do more if it had more armaments and helicopters. He noted that the King had approved RNA participation in a U.S.-organized counter-insurgency seminar. Thapa indicated His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) would take steps necessary to prevent Maoists from infiltrating the Parties' planned April 8 demonstration, but also recognized the possibility and need for reconciliation between the Palace and the Parties. The Ambassador urged the RNA to continue to improve its human rights record. Thapa mentioned that RNA troops could participate in the UN Peacekeeping effort in Sudan after the Burundi mission ended in December 2006. End Summary.

RNA Successfully Addressing Maoist Operations ...

[1](#)2. (C) COAS Gen. Thapa said that since his March 9 meeting with SCA PDAS Camp (ref A), the RNA had had "a lot of confrontations" with the Maoists. Thapa opined that he did not think "the Maoists are in a very good situation." He explained that although the Maoists could still attack, Maoists cadre were deserting and the insurgents faced internal political problems. "We feel with a little bit of effort, this could be a success story." He noted that

military, diplomatic, political, and economic pressure needed to come together to defeat the Maoists. The COAS remarked that morale in the RNA was still quite high. Soldiers were angry because Maoists had harassed their families and thus the soldiers wanted "to fight and win this war." Taking a shot at India, he said that "if there is not too much active support from India to the Maoists, Nepal will be okay." He mentioned that reports from eastern Nepal indicated the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and other insurgent groups had infiltrated into Nepal, although he discounted those groups as a threat.

¶3. (C) General Thapa said that in Kathmandu security services had been successful in capturing the Maoist Special Task Force (STF) leaders in Bhaktapur and Kathmandu, although the Lalitpur STF commander had escaped. (Note: RNA spokesperson General Chand told the press that STF had infiltrated Kathmandu Valley; this story appeared in the March 29 papers. End Note.) Elsewhere, Thapa noted that there were still at least 700 Maoists in Palpa and Arghakhanchi Districts in western Nepal, but that the RNA might have prevented the Maoists from approaching Kathmandu. He cited the March 21 attack on Maoists in Dhading (ref B) as a successful military operation. Thapa also discussed the March 27 operation in Sindhupalchowk (ref C), where Maoists, reportedly including some top leaders, had gathered. Pointing out that the Maoists had used a school for their gathering, the COAS commented that normally helicopters hover and hold their fire until Maoists leave a school. In Sindhupalchowk, however, Maoists had fired on the helicopter, and the RNA was compelled to return fire. (Note: Schools are currently not in session in Nepal so students and faculty were not present. End note.)

... But Feeling Lack of Lethal Assistance

¶4. (C) COAS Thapa noted that the lack of helicopters and armaments had hampered the RNA. Although the RNA was acquiring two MI-17 helicopters, it needed more. He also lamented the lack of armored vehicles, which India was to have supplied (36 in 2005, 100 in 2006 and 100 in 2007), and remarked that armored vehicles would be very effective in the terai and other locales with roads.

April 6-9 Nationwide Closure; Possibility for Reconciliation

¶5. (C) Thapa explained that the police and Home Ministry had to be careful that the Maoists did not infiltrate Kathmandu during the Parties' planned April 8 demonstration. Upon hearing of the possibility that the Parties were calling upon the Maoists to withdraw the bandh, Thapa noted that that would definitely give an opportunity for dialogue. The Ambassador raised the suggestion he had raised with HMGN officials that the King should reach out to the political parties while announcing HMGN wanted to negotiate a cease-fire with the Maoists (ref D). Thapa responded that "in today's world, the U.S. is the only superpower, so what you say carries a lot of weight."

Importance of Human Rights

¶6. (C) The Ambassador encouraged the RNA to continue to improve its human rights record. He urged the RNA to appoint a general officer to head up its human rights cell. (Note: A colonel currently occupies the position. End note.) He noted that Human Rights Watch had issued a balanced report, which had noted some progress on the RNA's part. Thapa commented that the International Committee for the Red Cross was happy that it now had a Memorandum of Understanding in place and that it had resumed its visits to RNA barracks. The Ambassador reminded COAS Thapa that allowing access to places of detention was one of the conditions required by the Leahy Amendment to allow for Foreign Military Financing assistance and urged the RNA to meet all the applicable Leahy criteria.

RNA Participation in UN Peacekeeping

¶17. (C) General Thapa noted that the Burundi peacekeeping mission was scheduled to close operations in December, so the RNA might be able to send a battalion to Darfur, Sudan. He said Nepal was proud of its participation in Burundi over the past three to four years and described that as a successful mission.

APCSS Counter-Insurgency Seminar Approved

¶18. (C) COAS Thapa stated that the King had sanctioned the counter-insurgency seminar planned for June to be organized by the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) in Hawaii. COAS Thapa indicated the RNA was enthusiastic about the seminar, nothing else was needed and it was a go.

Comment

¶19. (C) We were struck by COAS Thapa's optimism. Although he indicated that the RNA could do better if it received lethal assistance, he did not seem as worried as he has previously. Later the same day, A/DCM hosted a dinner for 8 RNA officers, mostly brigadiers, and Emboffs were struck by the same sense of optimism and confidence in private, informal conversations with the officers. Although they acknowledged that a military solution was not in the offing, the generals uniformly maintained that the Army was succeeding in its task of creating conditions that will bring the Maoists to the negotiating table. While that would be a positive development, if Thapa is advising the King that the RNA has the Maoist threat under control militarily, the King may be

less likely to feel compelled to reach out to the political parties.
MORIARTY